

WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS USA

Formerly the World Organization Against Torture USA

Morton Sklar, Executive Director

August 5, 2004

Congressman Edward J. Markey
United States House of Representatives
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2107

Dear Congressman Markey:

The World Organization for Human Rights USA supports H.R. 4674, which would ban the U.S. government practice of rendering individuals to other nations to be tortured for the purposes of interrogation.

Our organization has been fighting the practice of rendition to torture through litigation. We also published an op-ed piece on the case of Maher Arar, the Canadian who was sent by the United States to Syria for interrogation and torture, and who was the first detainee identified as being a victim of rendition to torture. On July 28, 2004, we filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of the family of Ahmed Abu Ali, a U.S. citizen who has been detained and interrogated in Saudi Arabia for over a year at the request of the U.S. government. It is the first legal challenge to the U.S. government's policy of rendition to torture on behalf of a prisoner who remains in detention. We hope that legislation like H.R. 4674 will end the U.S. policy that landed Ahmed Abu Ali in a Saudi prison.

Ahmed Abu Ali is fortunate that we know of his case because he has devoted family members pursuing his cause in the United States. However, hundreds of other individuals who have fallen victim to the practice of rendition to torture remain helpless in foreign prisons because we do not know who they are. Legislation such as H.R. 4674 may be their only hope of securing freedom.

The World Organization for Human Rights USA commends the effort that you have made in drafting H.R. 4674, and we hope that Congress will reaffirm our country's commitment to the Convention Against Torture by passing this bill.

Sincerely,

Morton Sklar,
Executive Director

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The World Organization for Human Rights USA (or Human Rights USA for short) is an independent, affiliated national member of the International World Organization Against Torture and SOS Torture Networks.